

Peat Facts

- Peat has been used in a variety of ways for hundreds of years. Its use as a domestic fuel dates back at least to Roman times. The U.S.S.R. introduced its first peat-burning generating plant in 1914. Ireland generates about one-third of its energy requirements from peat. North America's first peat-fired powerplant started operation in Maine in 1990 and produces 22.8 megawatts of electricity hourly.
- Various crops are harvested from peatlands including blueberries, cranberries, wood, grains, and hay. Cranberries have a commercial value of over \$600 million annually in the U.S.
- Because of the absorbent properties of peat, it has been used to diaper children, as surgical dressings, and recently as an absorbent agent for use on oil spills. Peat has been used as insulation in homes, blended to make plywood, peat cork and peatcrete, and as a wood preservative. Peat baths have been used as a treatment for various injuries and medical conditions. Peatlands have also been used to treat sewage wastes.
- Bronze and Iron Age artifacts are frequently found in European peats including jewelry, clothing, weapons, and musical instruments. European bogs have yielded over 2,000 well-preserved human bodies, most dating from 800 B.C. to A.D. 400. In Florida bogs, several hundred bodies from the Archaic period were found and brain tissue and associated DNA recovered.
- Peatlands appear in the writings of Tacitus, Shakespeare, Linnaeus, and Emily Dickinson. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* wrote, "Rank reeds and lush, slimy water-plants sent an odour of decay...while a false step plunged us more than once thigh deep into the dark, quivering mire."

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